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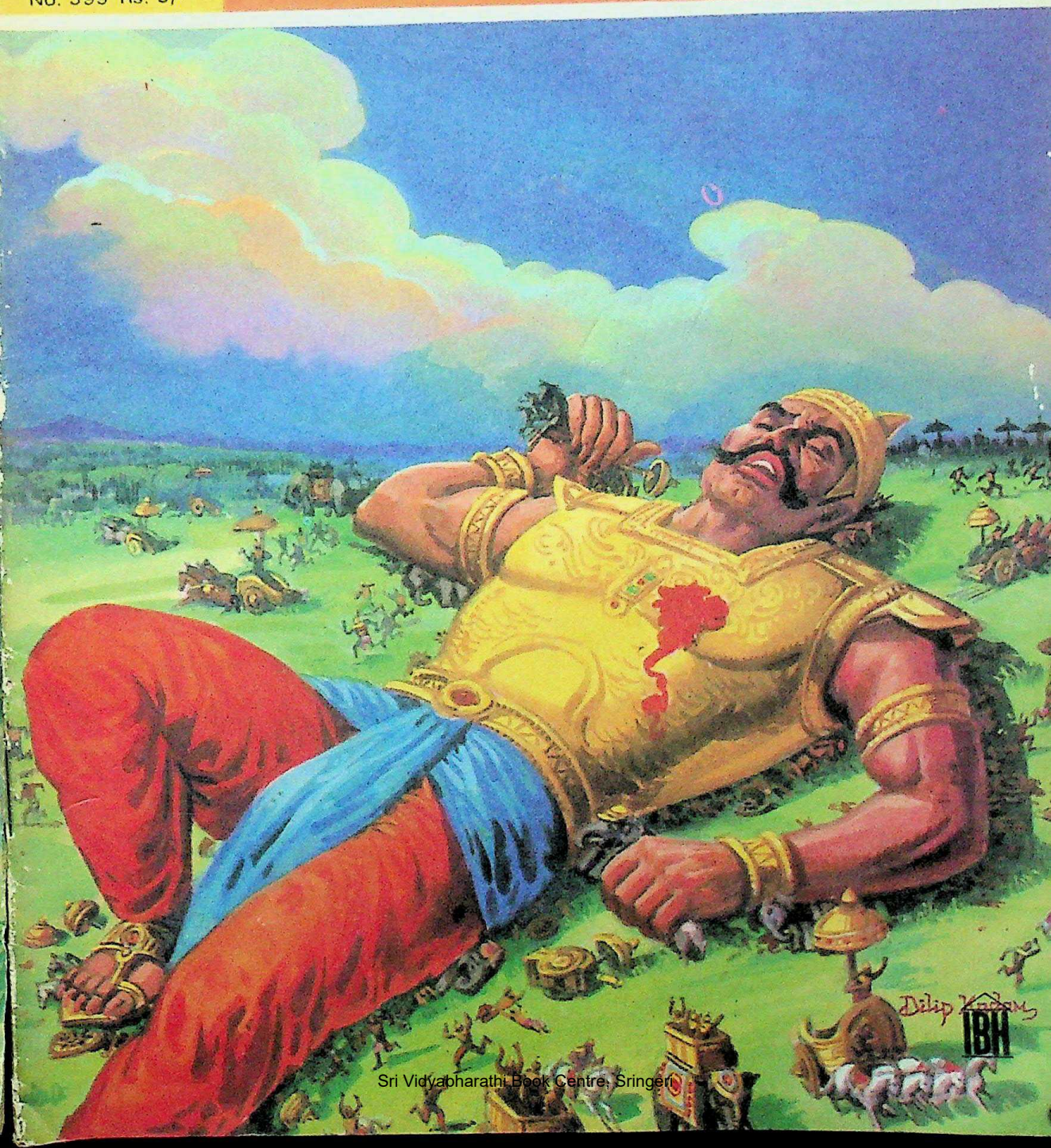
AMAR CHITRA KATHA

No. 399 Rs. 5/-

THE BATTLE AT MIDNIGHT

Mahabharata-36



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MAHABHARATA

Veda Vyasa's Epic on the Bharata race was first recited in public by his disciple Vaishampayana at the behest of the ageless seer Vyasa himself.

The recital took place in the august presence of King Janamejaya, great grandson of Vyasa and the many learned sages who had assembled for Janamejaya's Sarpa Satra (a 12-year-long snake sacrifice).

In the thirty-fifth session of our rendering of the Mahabharata, we saw Arjuna resolved to fulfil his vow of killing Jayadratha, to avenge the death of his son, Abhimanyu. However, the task he had undertaken was a formidable one, since Jayadratha was surrounded by an invincible formation of mighty warriors. As advised by Krishna, Arjuna sought Lord Shiva's blessings and obtained from him a celestial weapon – Pashupata. The next day, after a long-drawn battle, Arjuna managed to break through the complex formation and kill Jayadratha.

The last two issues of Amar Chitra Katha and Tinkle were delayed due to a breakdown in the press. We apologise to our subscribers and readers for the inconvenience caused. From this issue on, we are back on schedule.

OUR FORTHCOMING TITLE :

April 1, 1988 :

THE DEADLY FEAST

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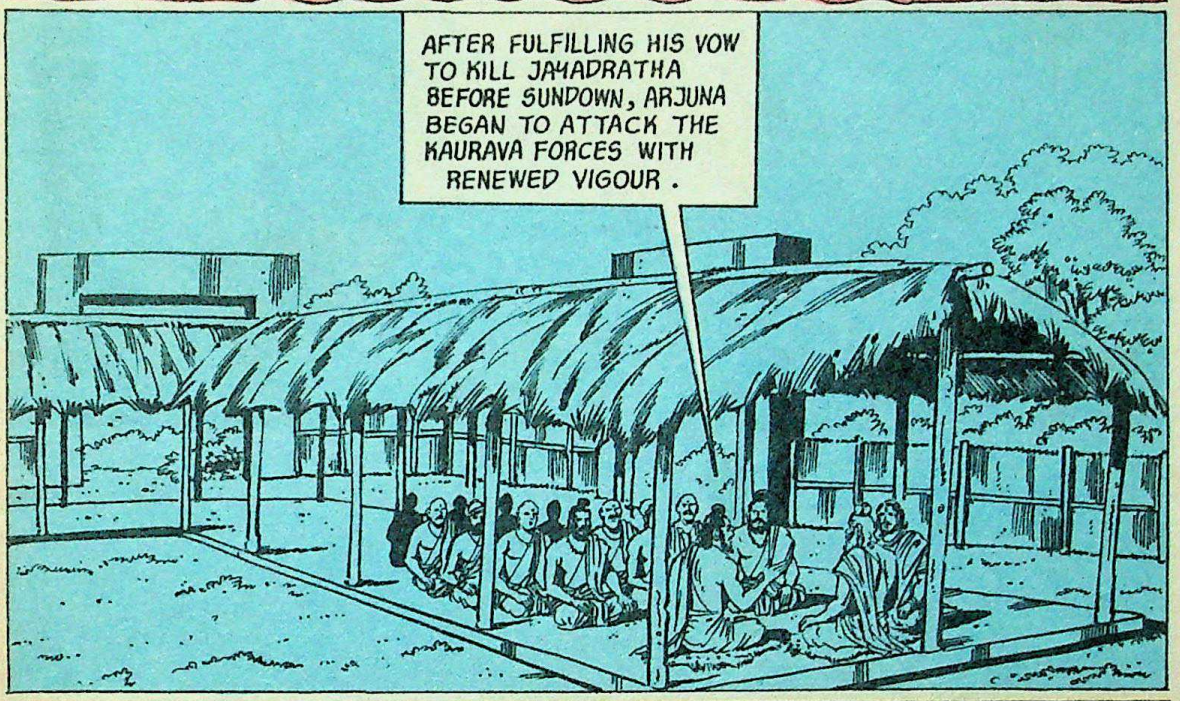
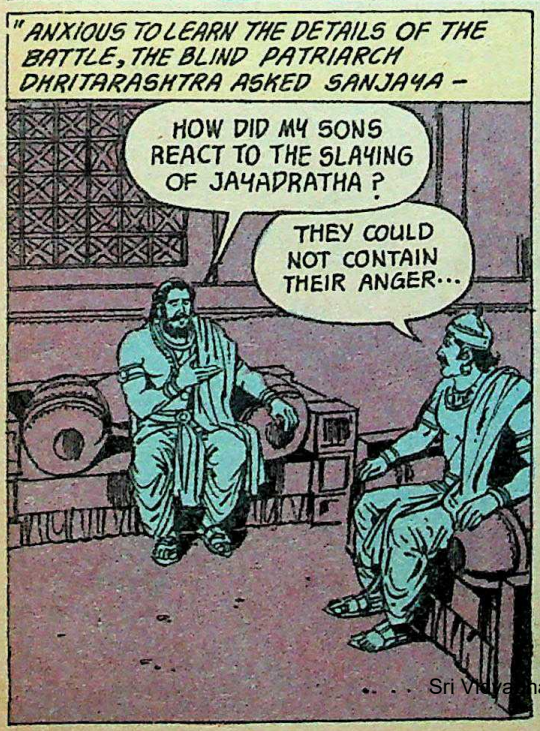
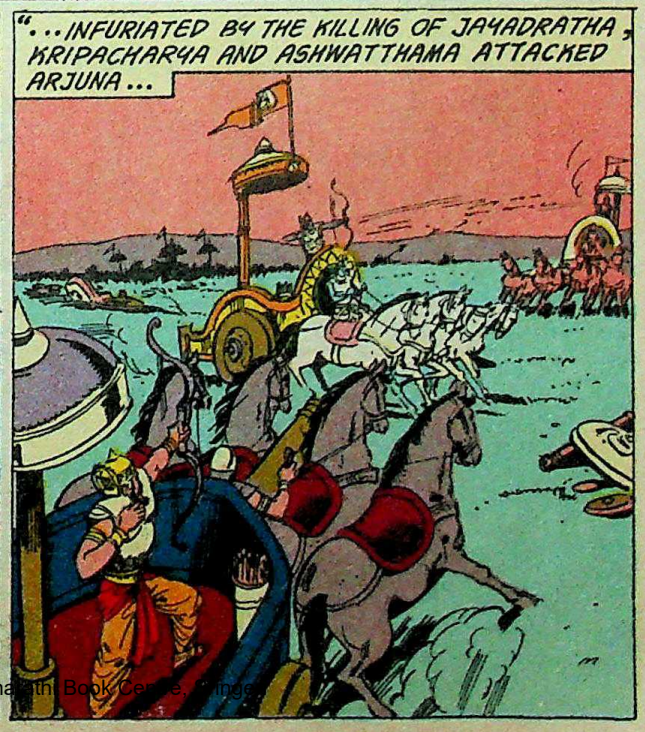
Mahabharata – 36

THE BATTLE AT MIDNIGHT







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"RELUCTANT TO ATTACK HIS GURU, ARJUNA USED THE MILDEST OF ARROWS...

"...BUT SO NUMEROUS WERE THEY THAT THEY RENDERED KRIPACHARYA UNCONSCIOUS.

"ARJUNA THOUGHT THAT KRIPACHARYA WAS DEAD. HE WAS SMITTEN WITH GUILT.

WOE BETIDE ME! I HAVE KILLED MY OWN GURU!

"KARNA SEIZED THE OPPORTUNITY TO ATTACK THE REPENTANT ARJUNA. SATYAKI AND OTHER WARRIORS RUSHED TO CONFRONT HIM.

"KRISHNA HOWEVER PREVENTED ARJUNA FROM FIGHTING WITH KARNA.

NO, ARJUNA, KARNA IS ARMED WITH THE CELESTIAL WEAPON FROM INDRA. DO NOT CONFRONT HIM NOW. LET SATYAKI DEAL WITH HIM.

"TO HELP SATYAKI, KRISHNA SUMMONED HIS OWN CHARIOT.

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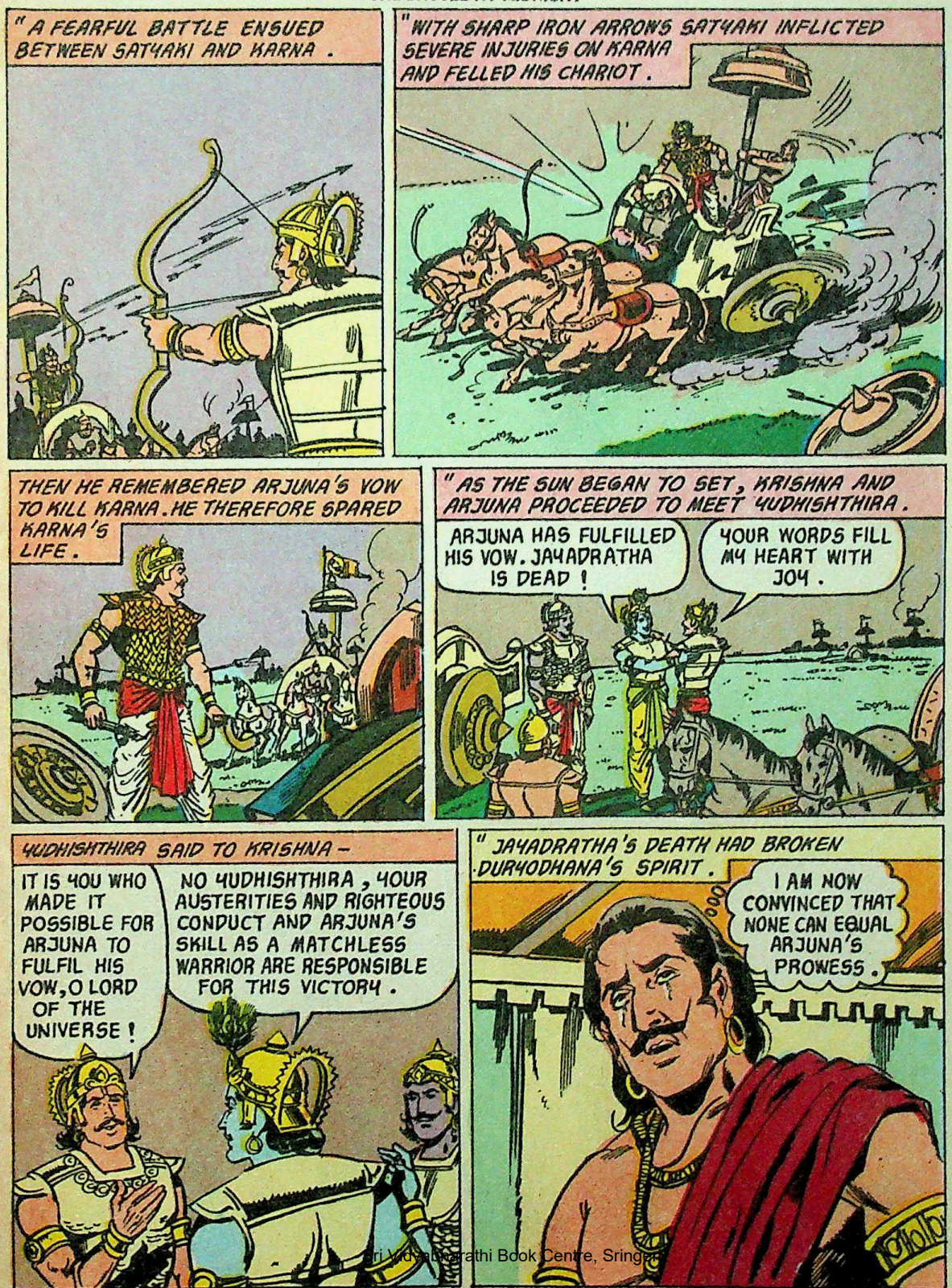

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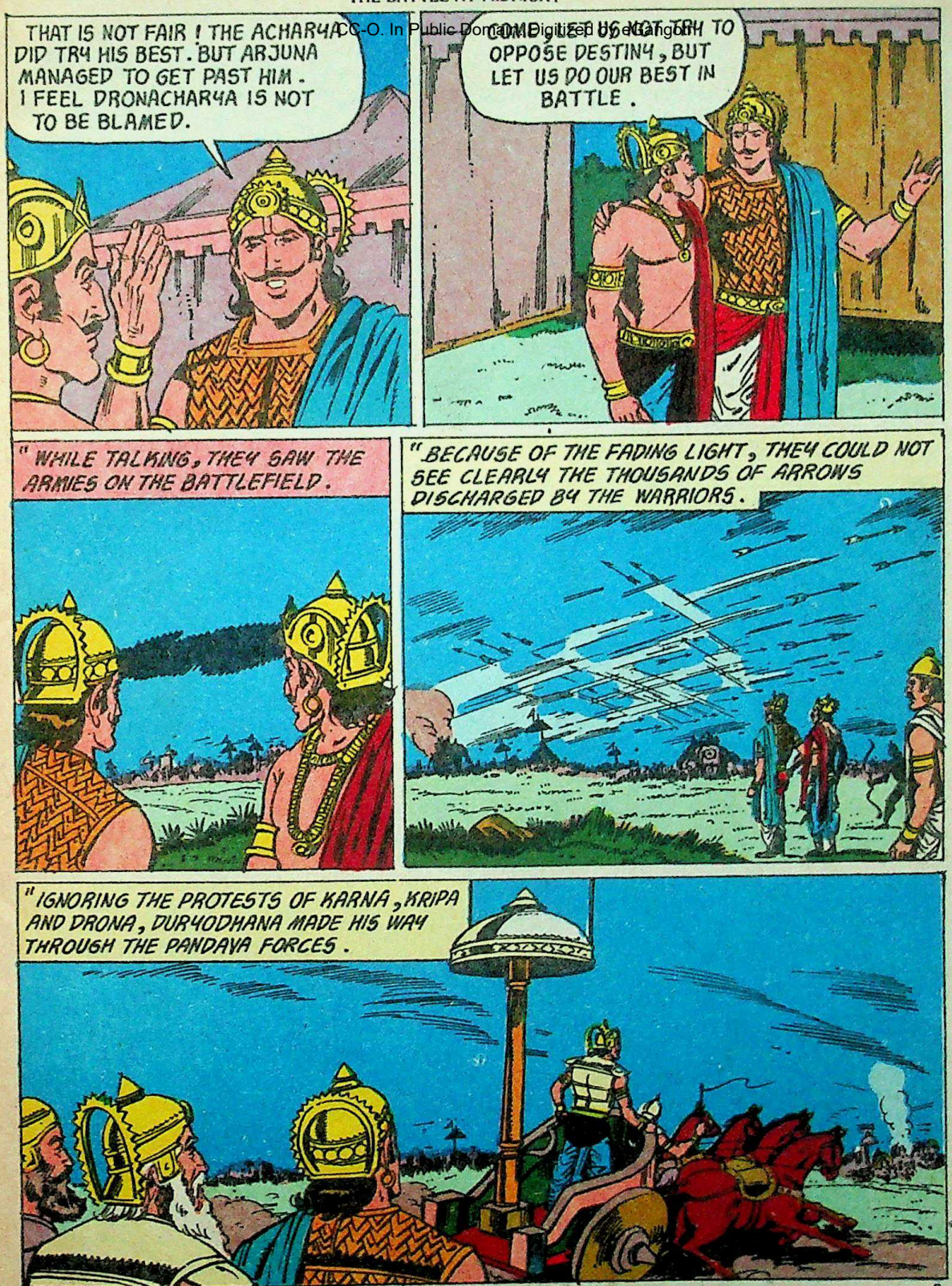

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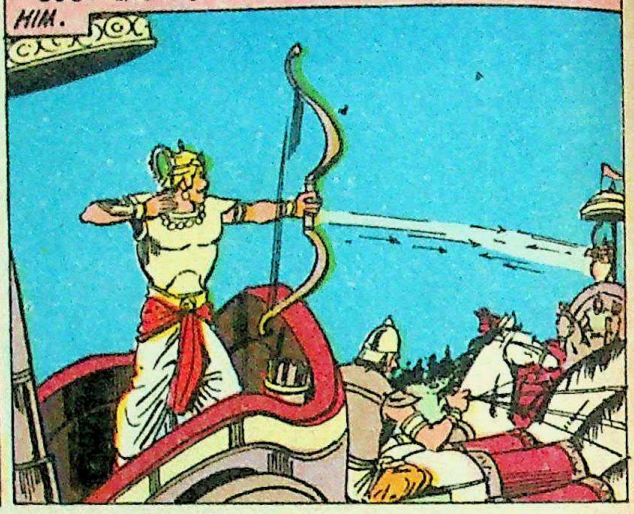
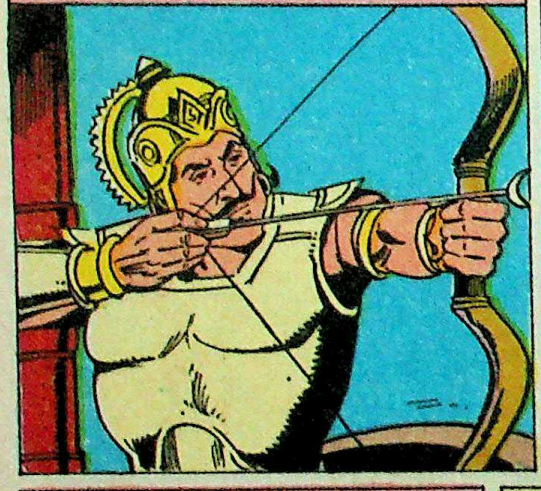
" AS THE MORNING SUN DISPELS THE DARKNESS, DURYODHANA DESTROYED MANY PANDAVA SOLDIERS.

THEN YUDHISHTHIRA CHARGED TOWARDS HIM.



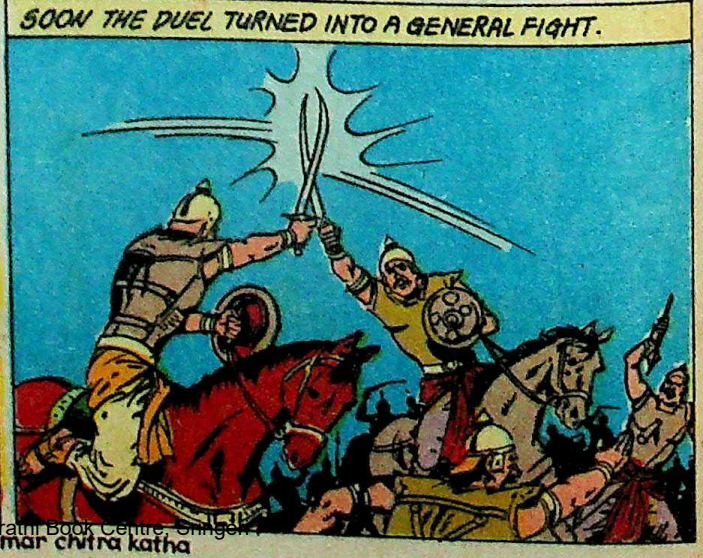
"AND THE TWO WERE LOCKED IN COMBAT.



"WITH HIS POWERFUL ARROWS, DURYODHANA INFLICTED INJURIES ON YUDHISHTHIRA, HIS CHARIOTEER AND ALL THE FOUR HORSES.

"DURYODHANA WAS ALSO SERIOUSLY INJURED BY YUDHISHTHIRA'S BARRAGE OF ARROWS AND HE SAT DOWN IN THE CHARIOT.

SOON THE DUEL TURNED INTO A GENERAL FIGHT.



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" SOMADATTA FAINTED AS A RESULT OF SATYAKI'S ATTACK AND HAD TO BE CARRIED AWAY .

" SEEING THIS , AN ENRAGED DRONA RUSHED TOWARDS SATYAKI .

" SO FURIOUS WAS HE THAT ANYONE WHO COME IN HIS WAY WAS INSTANTLY KILLED .

" ARJUNA THEN SAID TO KRISHNA —

PLEASE DRIVE ME TOWARDS DRONA .

" BHEEMA TOO FOLLOWED .

" JUST THEN GHATOTKACHA , BHEEMA'S SON , APPEARED ON THE SCENE .

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* DEMONS .

** DISC .

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"WITH HIS WELL-AIMED ARROWS, ASHWATTHAMA NIMBLY CAST IT ASUNDER.

"GHATOTKACHA'S SON NOW JOINED THE FIGHT. ALSO USING MAGIC.

"BUT HE SOON SUCCUMBED TO ASHWATTHAMA'S ARROWS. GHATOTKACHA WAS FURIOUS.

ASHWATTHAMA, JUST WAIT! YOU CANNOT ESCAPE ALIVE TODAY!

OH! GO AND FIGHT WITH SOMEONE ELSE. DO NOT IRRITATE ME OR ELSE ...

"GHATOTKACHA TRIED VARIOUS TRICKS AND CREATED ILLUSION AFTER ILLUSION TO SCARE ASHWATTHAMA.

"A CALM AND COLLECTED ASHWATTHAMA ASSURED THE WORRIED DURYODHANA.

LEAVE THIS TO ME, O KING! GO AND REASSURE YOUR SOLDIERS.

WITH AN ARROW THAT RESEMBLED THE MACE OF YAMA* ASHWATTHAMA WOUNDED GHATOTKACHA, WHO FELL TO THE GROUND.

* GOD OF DEATH

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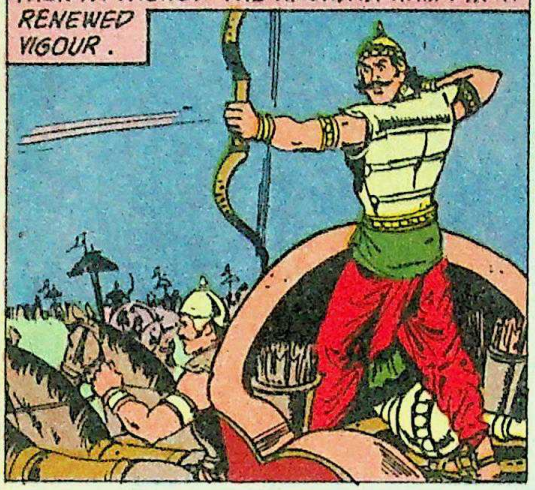
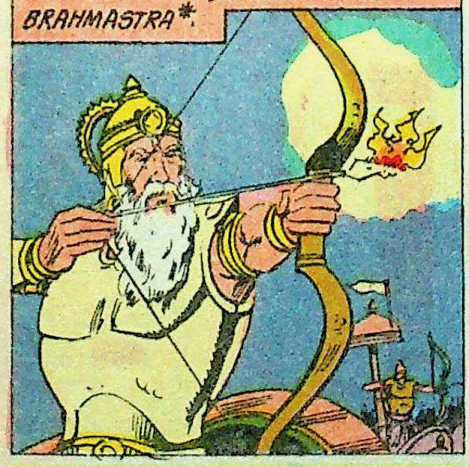
"MANY KINGS IN THE PANDAVA ARMY FELT THAT GHATOTKACHA HAD BEEN KILLED, AND LOST THE WILL TO FIGHT. BHEEMA THEN ATTACKED THE KAURAVA ARMY WITH RENEWED VIGOUR.

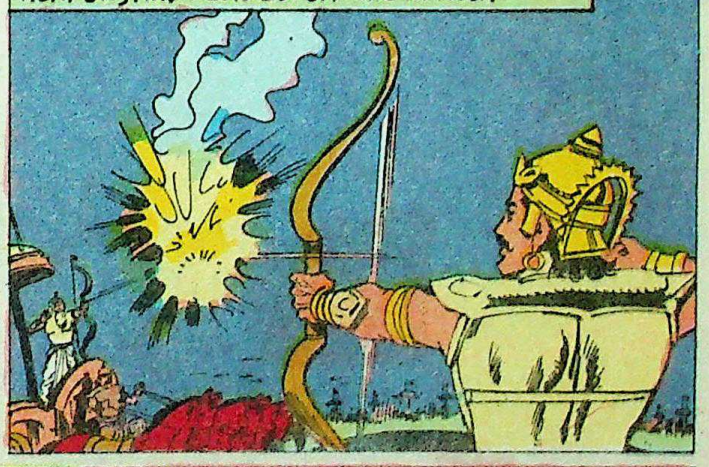


SANJAYA NARRATED THE GRUESOME DETAILS.

"MEANWHILE DRONA RAINED VARIOUS CELESTIAL WEAPONS ON YUDHISHTHIRA, INCLUDING TH BRAHMASTRA*.

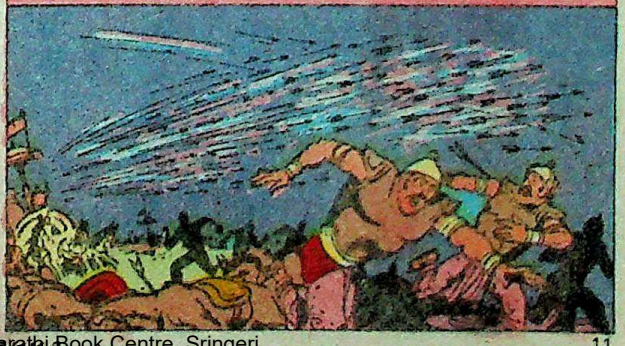


"BUT HIS EFFORTS WERE FUTILE SINCE YUDHISHTHIRA MATCHED HIM WEAPON FOR WEAPON, AND FENDED OFF HIS ATTACK.



"DRONA NOW TURNED AWAY AND ATTACKED DRUPADA'S ARMY ONLY TO FIND ARJUNA AND BHEEMA CONFRONTING HIM.

"KAURAVA SOLDIERS ENFEEBLED BY LACK OF SLEEP AND TERRIFIED BY THE DARK NIGHT, RAN AMOK UNDER ARJUNA'S ONSLAUGHT.



* A WEAPON INVOKING THE POWER OF BRAHMA.

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"ADDRESSING KARNA, DURYODHANA SAID—

KARNA, MY FRIEND, THE TIME HAS COME FOR YOU TO PROVE YOUR FRIENDSHIP. COME TO THE RESCUE OF MY MEN.

REST ASSURED, I SWEAR I WILL KILL THE PANDAVAS AND PANCHALAS AND LAY THE EARTH AT YOUR FEET TO RULE OVER.

"KRIPACHARYA INTERVENED WITH A MOCKING SMILE—

IF WORDS WERE ENOUGH, THEN INDEED YOU ARE THE MAN DURYODHANA NEEDS NOW.

YOU MAY BRAG ABOUT YOUR PROWESS TILL YOU FACE ARJUNA'S ARROWS.

JUST AS BRAHMANAS ARE RENOWNED FOR THEIR SERMONS, KSHATRIYAS FOR THEIR VALOUR, YOUR PROWESS IS IN BUILDING CASTLES IN THE AIR.

YOU WILL SEE ME KILL ARJUNA WITH THE HELP OF THE SHAKTI GIVEN BY INDRA.

"WHEN KRIPACHARYA CONTINUED HIS TAUNTS, KARNA FLARED UP.

ONE MORE WORD FROM YOU AND I WILL CUT OFF YOUR TONGUE.

ENRAGED BY KARNA'S VERBAL DUEL WITH HIS UNCLE KRIPA, ASHWATTHAMA RUSHED TOWARDS KARNA WITH HIS DRAWN SWORD RAISED UP. BUT DURYODHANA SAID—

SHED THIS ANGER. WE HAVE A GREAT TASK BEFORE US.

WE WILL FORGIVE KARNA NOW. BUT SOON ARJUNA WILL SHATTER HIS EGO.

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"AS SOON AS KARNA TOOK UP ARMS, THE PANDAVA ARMY ATTACKED HIM WITH FURY.

KILL KARNA.

DESTROY THIS FOOLISH MAN!

"BUT KARNA AT HIS BEST WAS TERROR INCARNATE.

"SEEING KARNA'S PROWESS, DURYODHANA TOLD ASHWATTHAMA—

GREAT IS KARNA'S VALOUR. LOOK! ARJUNA IS MOVING TOWARDS HIM NOW. SEE THAT KARNA IS PROTECTED FROM HIM.

"KARNA AND ARJUNA WERE SOON ENGAGED IN A WELL-MATCHED BATTLE...

"...TILL ARJUNA CUT OFF KARNA'S BOW STRING, KILLED HIS CHARIOTEER AND ALL THE FOUR HORSES. KARNA THEN RAN TOWARDS THE CHARIOT OF KRIPACHARYA.

"THE KAURAVA ARMY RAN HELTER-SKELTER IN FEAR OF ARJUNA. DURYODHANA SAID—

DO NOT RUN AWAY, MY BRAVE MEN! I WILL KILL ARJUNA.

Sri Vidya

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"KRIPA CONFIDED IN ASHWATTHAMA.

IN HIS RAGE, DURYODHANA WANTS TO CONFRONT ARJUNA. STOP HIM BEFORE HE GETS KILLED.

"ASHWATTHAMA AT ONCE WENT TO DURYODHANA.

DO NOT INSULT ME BY RUSHING TO FIGHT ARJUNA WHEN I AM ALIVE. LEAVE THAT TO ME.

AH! BUT BOTH YOU AND YOUR FATHER ARE BESOTTED WITH YOUR LOVE FOR THE PANDAVAS. ELSE YOU WOULD HAVE ROUTED THEIR ARMY WITH EASE.

"ASHWATTHAMA REALISED THAT DURYODHANA WAS SPEAKING IN ANGER.

OF COURSE WE DO LOVE THE PANDAVAS. BUT IN THE BATTLEFIELD WE FIGHT THEM WITH ALL OUR MIGHT. JUST WATCH MY PROWESS TODAY.

"TRUE TO HIS WORD, ASHWATTHAMA CHALLENGED THE ENEMY FORCES.

COME, RAIN YOUR ARROWS ON ME!

"SEEING THE PANDAVA SOLDIERS FLEEING UNDER ASHWATTHAMA'S ATTACK, DHRISHTADYUMNA CHALLENGED HIM—

COME FIGHT WITH ME IF YOU ARE A TRUE WARRIOR.

STAND STILL FOR JUST TWO MINUTES AND I WILL SEND YOU TO THE ABODE OF YAMA*!

"THE DUEL OF WORDS BETWEEN ASHWATTHAMA AND DHRISHTADYUMNA WAS AS FIERCE AS THE ONE WITH ARROWS.

WAIT! WAIT! I WILL PIERCE YOUR BODY WITH ARROWS!

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* GOD OF DEATH

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"ASHWATTHAMA MANAGED TO DESTROY DHRISHTADYUMNA'S UMBRELLA, REAR ATTENDANTS, CHARIOTEER AND ALL THE FOUR HORSES.

ASHWATTHAMA HAS DEFEATED DHRISHTADYUMNA.

MEANWHILE SATYAKI SAID TO HIS CHARIOTEER—

TAKE ME TO SOMADATTA. I SWEAR I WILL KILL HIM TODAY.

"TRUE TO HIS WORD, SATYAKI DID SLAY SOMADATTA AFTER A LONG FIGHT.

WHEN THE KAURAVA WARRIORS CONVERGED ON SATYAKI, YUDHISHTHIRA RUSHED TO HIS HELP AND LAUNCHED A FURIOUS ATTACK ON DRONA. DEEPLY WOUNDED, DRONA SAT DOWN IN THE CHARIOT.

"ON RECOVERING, DRONA SENT A VAYU ASTRA* WHICH YUDHISHTHIRA REPELLED BRAVELY. SEEING THIS, KRISHNA CAUTIONED.

DRONA IS BENT ON CAPTURING YOU. AVOID HIM. A KING SHOULD FIGHT ONLY WITH A KING.

KRISHNA IS RIGHT. LET ME GO AND HELP BHEEMA IN HIS ATTACK.

"ALL THIS WHILE, THE BATTLE WAS BEING WAGED IN THE DEAD OF NIGHT, AIDED BY GUESSWORK AND THE CALLING OUT OF NAMES.

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* ARROW INVOKING THE POWER OF THE WIND GOD.

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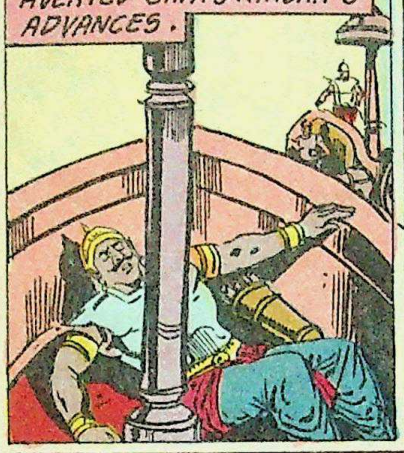
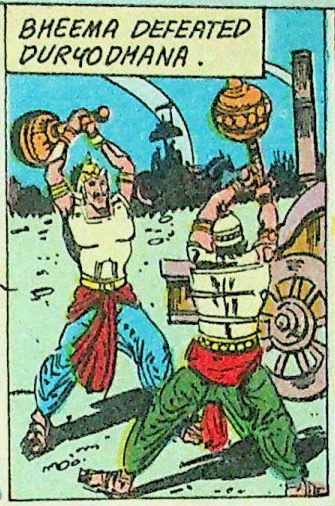
"IN THE BATTLE THAT ENSUED, SEVERAL DUELS WERE FOUGHT.

ASHWATTHAMA ABLY AVERTED GHATOTKACHA'S ADVANCES.



BHEEMA DEFEATED DURYODHANA.



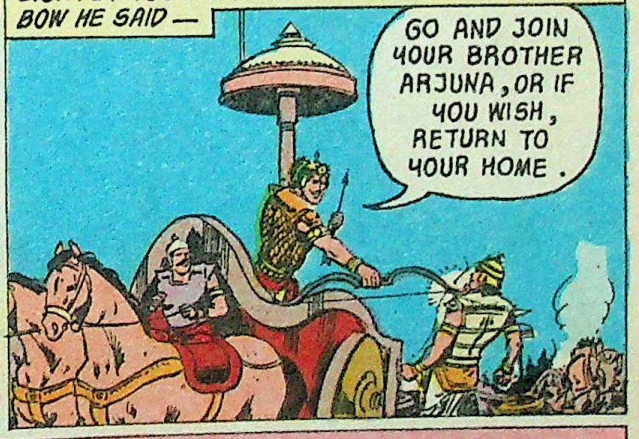
KARNA AND SAHADEVA MET IN A DUEL.

"SAHADEVA JUMPED DOWN FROM HIS CHARIOT AND PICKED UP THE WHEEL OF THE CHARIOT TO FLING AT KARNA.

DEAR CHILD! DO NOT TRY THE IMPOSSIBLE! WHY TRY TO FIGHT YOUR SUPERIORS?

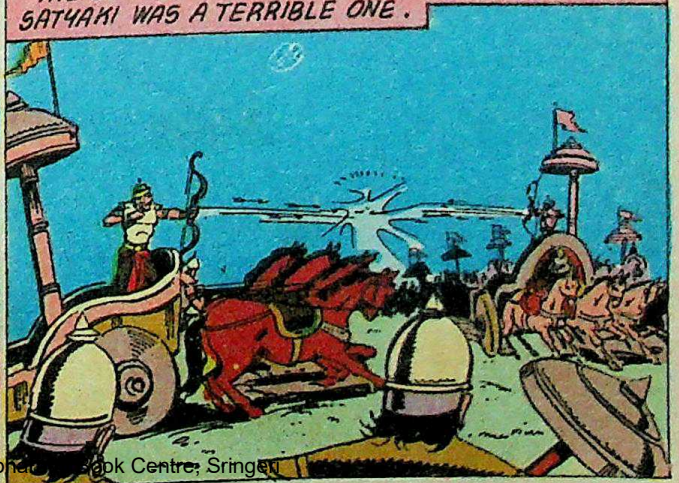
KARNA SHATTERED THE WHEEL WITH HIS ARROWS BUT SPARED SAHADEVA'S LIFE. LIGHTLY TOUCHING HIM WITH THE TIP OF HIS BOW HE SAID —

GO AND JOIN YOUR BROTHER ARJUNA, OR IF YOU WISH, RETURN TO YOUR HOME.



"MEANWHILE, VIRATA WAS DEFEATED BY SHALYA AND SHIKHANDI WAS VANQUISHED BY KRIPA. HOWEVER, NAKULA SCORED A VICTORY OVER SHAKUNI.

"THE BATTLE THAT RAGED BETWEEN KARNA AND SATYAKI WAS A TERRIBLE ONE.



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"KARNA'S FURY WAS CREATING HAVOC AMONG THE PANDAVA FORCES. ARJUNA SAID —

O KRISHNA! TAKE ME TOWARDS KARNA. I MUST KILL HIM OR BE KILLED TODAY.

"AWARE OF THE MIGHTY SHAKTI IN KARNA'S POSSESSION, KRISHNA DEMURRED —

BESIDES YOU, GHATOTKACHA ALONE IS CAPABLE OF FACING KARNA. LET HIM DO SO, WHILE YOU PROTECT YUDHISHTHIRA.

"THEY SUMMONED GHATOTKACHA.

FIGHT KARNA WITH ALL YOUR ASTRAS AND KILL HIM. WE ARE DEPENDING ON YOU.

SATYAKI WILL BE WITH YOU. TOGETHER YOU CAN WORK WONDERS.

I WILL GO AT ONCE. SUCH A BATTLE WILL I WAGE TODAY THAT IT WILL BE REMEMBERED FOR EVER.

"IN THE MIDST OF THAT DREADFUL NIGHT, KARNA AND GHATOTKACHA FACED EACH OTHER.

"JUST AS DURYODHANA WAS ABOUT TO SEND DUHSHASANA TO KARNA'S AID, ALAMBUSHA APPROACHED HIM.

MY FATHER, JATASURA, THE LEADER OF RAKSHASAS, WAS KILLED BY THE PANDAVAS. GIVE ME A CHANCE TO AVENGE HIS DEATH. LET ME FIGHT THE PANDAVAS.

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"DURYODHANA WAS GLAD TO OBLIGE.

YOU ARE WELCOME. GO AND FIGHT GHATOTKACHA.

"THE TWO RAKSHASAS FOUGHT WITH VARIOUS WEAPONS AND FINALLY WITH BARE HANDS.

SUDDENLY, GHATOTKACHA JUMPED UP AND SWOOPED DOWN WITH A SWORD.

"WITH A DREADFUL CRY, GHATOTKACHA CUT OFF HIS OPPONENT'S HEAD.

"APPROACHING DURYODHANA, HE THREW ALAMBUSHA'S HEAD TOWARDS HIM.

IT IS SAID ONE SHOULD NOT VISIT A KING WITHOUT A GIFT. WAIT AWHILE AND I WILL BRING YOU A HEAD WHICH IS MORE DEAR TO YOU—KARNA'S!

SO FIERCE WAS THE BATTLE BETWEEN KARNA AND GHATOTKACHA THAT IT MADE MIGHTY WARRIORS TREMBLE. GHATOTKACHA WAS IN THE SKY IN A MINUTE...

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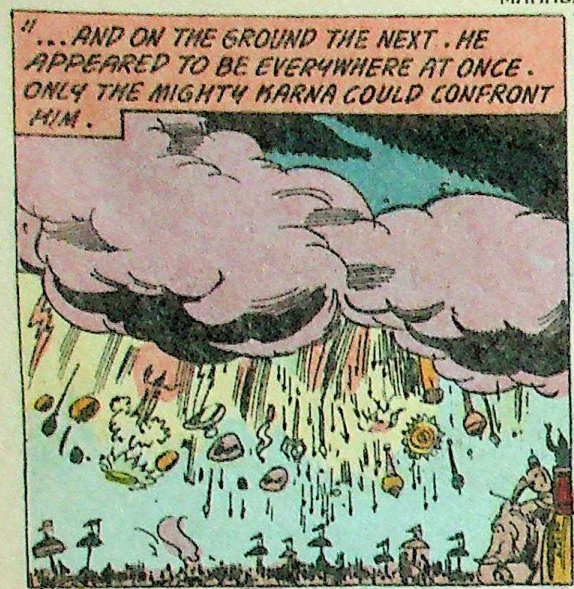

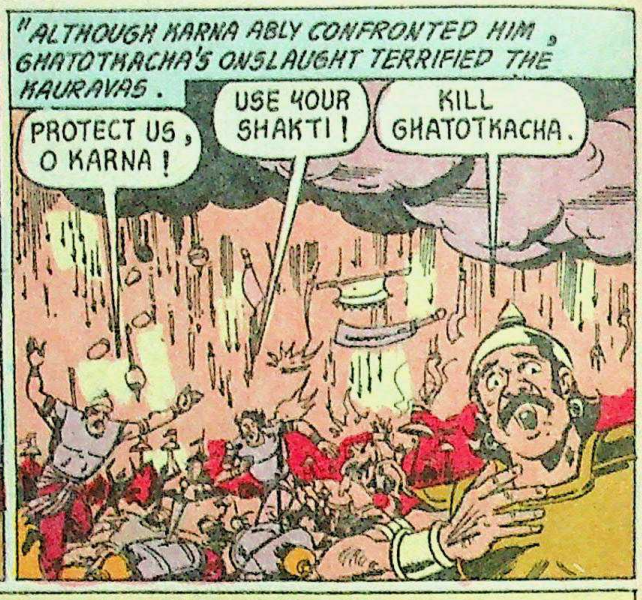

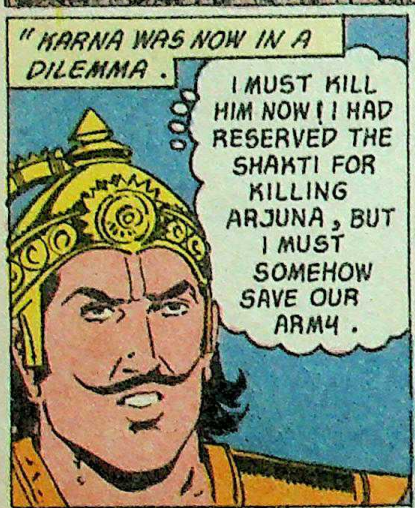

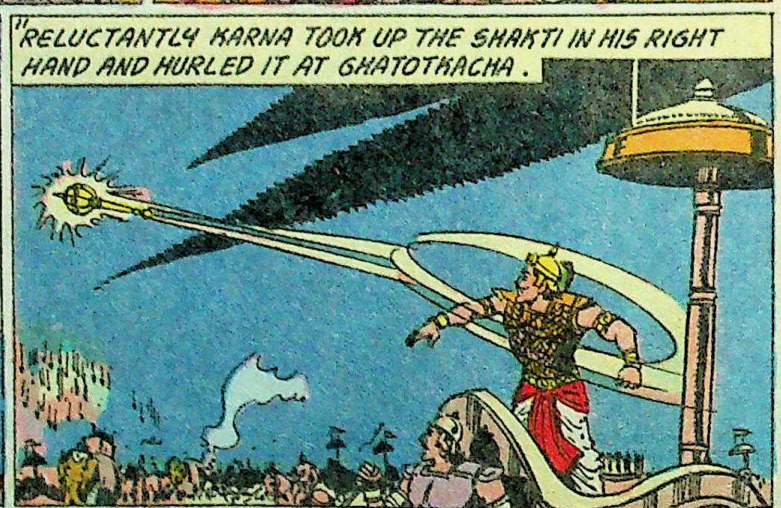

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... SO THAT WHEN THE SHAKTI PIERCED AND FELLED HIM, A VAST NUMBER OF KAURAVA SOLDIERS WERE CRUSHED UNDER HIS WEIGHT.

" BHEEMA AND OTHER PANDAVAS WERE SHOCKED AT HIS DEATH.

KRISHNA CONSOLED THEM AND SAID TO ARJUNA.

KARNA HAS USED HIS SHAKTI ONCE AND IT HAS RETURNED TO INDRA. OH! HOW I HAD WORRIED ABOUT HIS USING IT AGAINST YOU. NOW BEREFT OF THE SHAKTI, KARNA IS LIKE A FANGLESS SERPENT.

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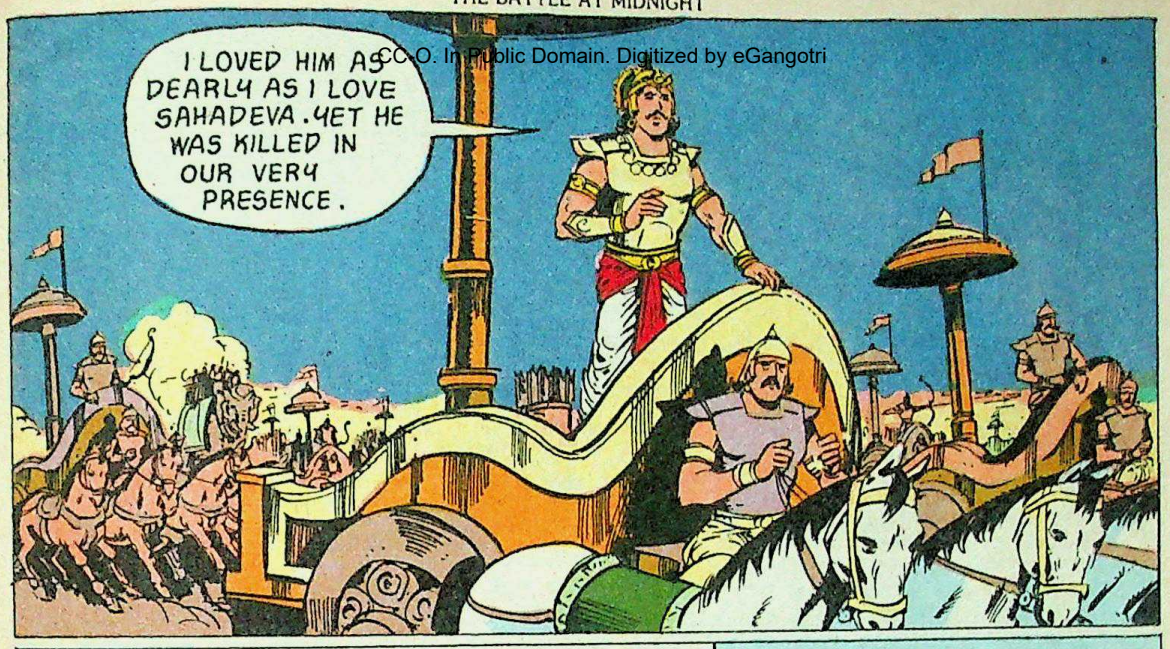

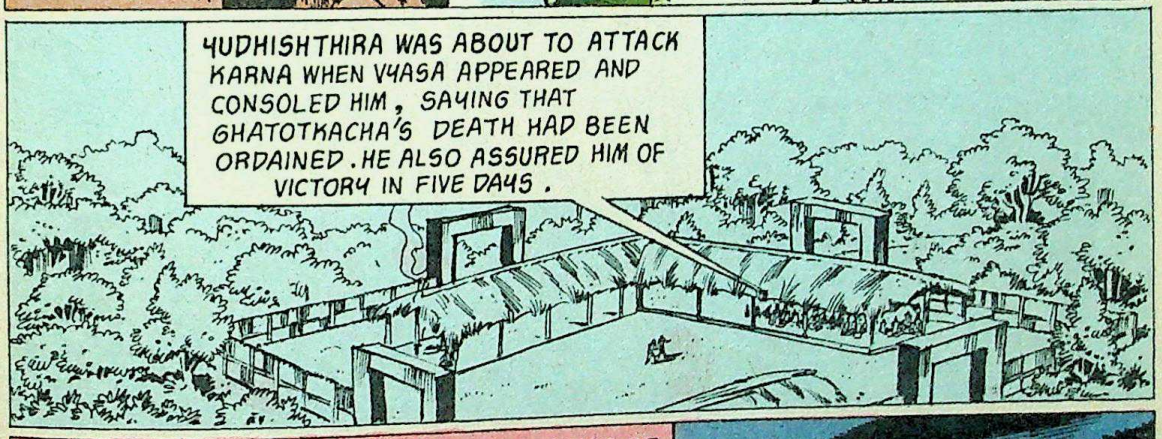

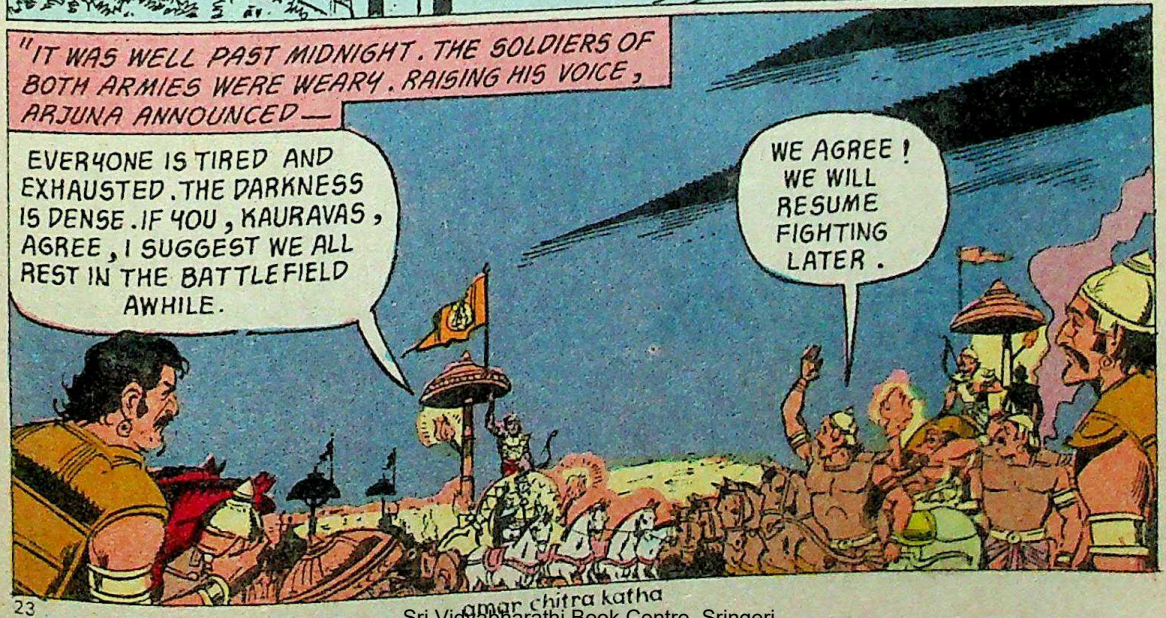

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"AS ARJUNA'S SUGGESTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY ACCEPTED, THE SOLIDERS GRATEFULLY LAY DOWN TO SLEEP.

ONLY ARJUNA COULD BE SO THOUGHTFUL! BLESS HIM.

"THE BATTLEFIELD WHICH HAD RESOUNDED WITH WAR CRIES WAS NOW ENVELOPED IN SILENCE. THE HUGE ARMIES LAY STILL LIKE A PAINTING DRAWN BY A GIFTED ARTIST...

"...TILL THE MOON CAME UP. ONE BY ONE THE MEN BEGAN TO STIR. THE BATTLE WAS RESUMED IN THE BRIGHT LIGHT OF THE MOON.

DURYODHANA SAID TO DRONA -

WITH YOUR RENOWNED PROWESS AND CELESTIAL WEAPONS, YOU COULD EASILY DEFEAT THE PANDAVAS. BUT ALAS! YOU CONTINUE TO FAVOUR THEM.

"THE OFT-REPEATED SARCASM AND ACCUSATION WERE BEGINNING TO IRRITATE DRONA.

SO FAR I HAVE FOUGHT WITH FAIR AND JUST MEANS AND REFRAINED FROM USING DIVINE WEAPONS ON ORDINARY SOLDIERS. NOW IF YOU SO WISH, I WILL USE UNFAIR MEANS AS WELL, TO FIGHT. BUT BELIEVE ME, WHEN I SAY, ARJUNA IS INVINCIBLE.

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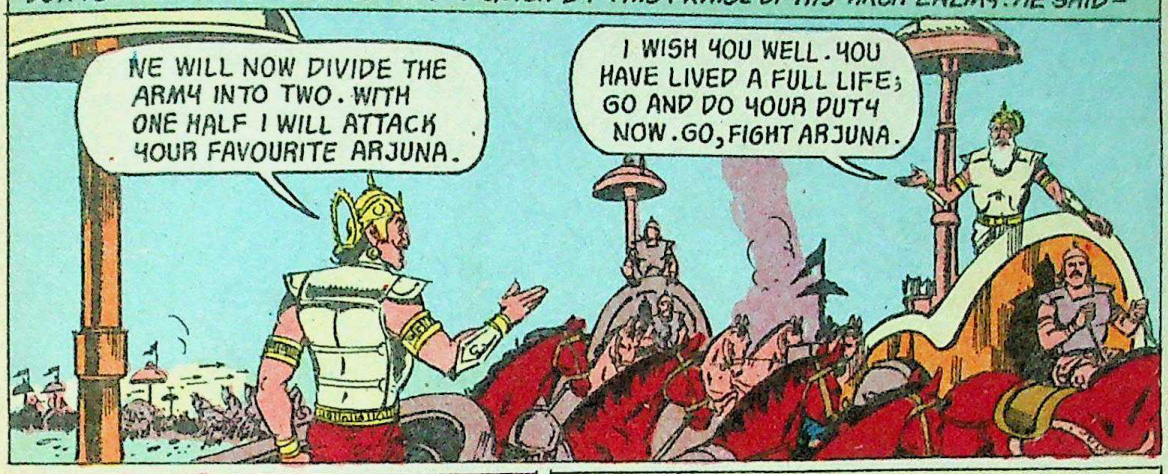
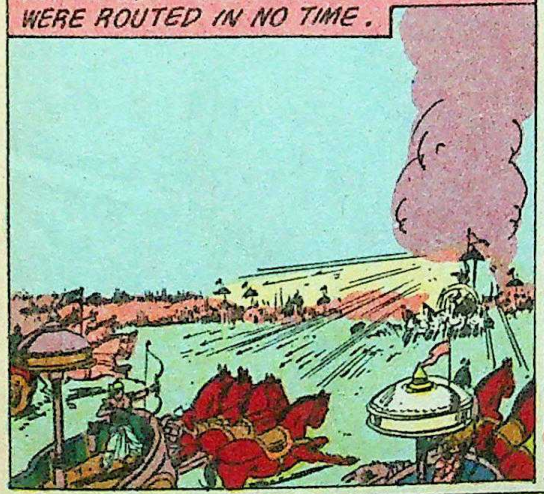
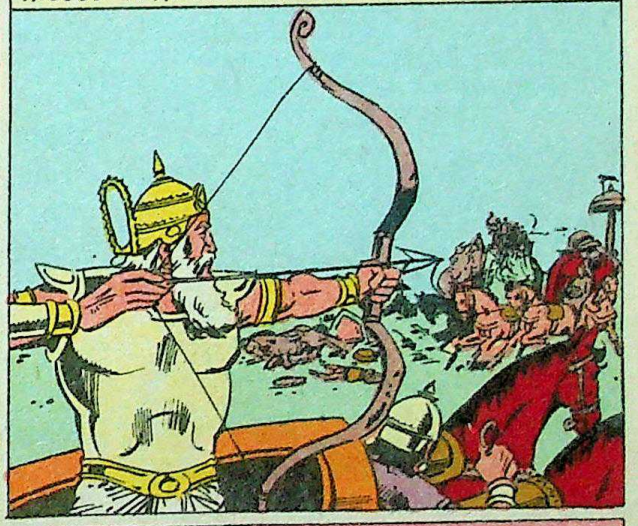
"DURYODHANA WAS TOUCHED TO THE QUICK BY THIS PRAISE OF HIS ARCH ENEMY. HE SAID-



"ONE HALF OF THE ARMY WITH DURYODHANA, DUHSHASANA, SHAKUNI AND KARNA, SET OUT TO CONFRONT ARJUNA. BUT THEY WERE ROUTED IN NO TIME.

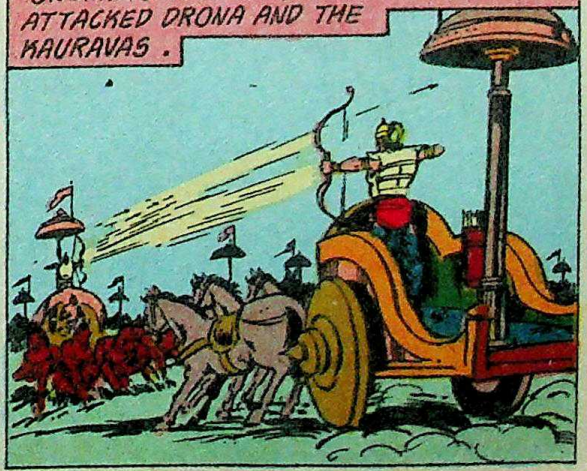


"DRONA LED THE REST OF THE ARMY AND KILLED THREE GRANDSONS OF DRUPADA.



"WITH TWO SHARP JAVELINS, HE KILLED VIRATA AND DRUPADA. DHRISHTADYUMNA WAS STUNNED WITH GRIEF.

"SWEARING REVENGE, DHRISHTADYUMNA ATTACKED DRONA AND THE KAURAVAS.



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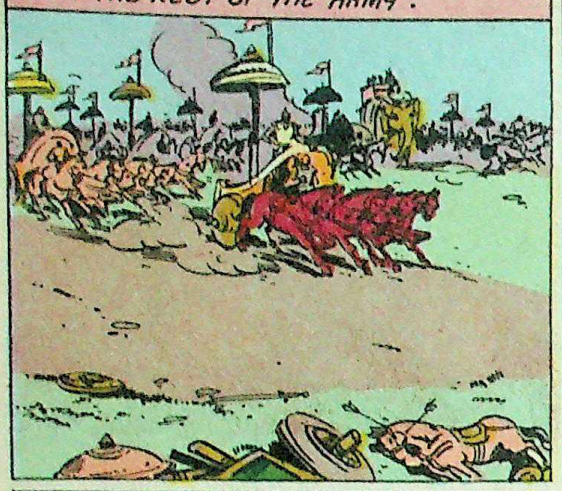
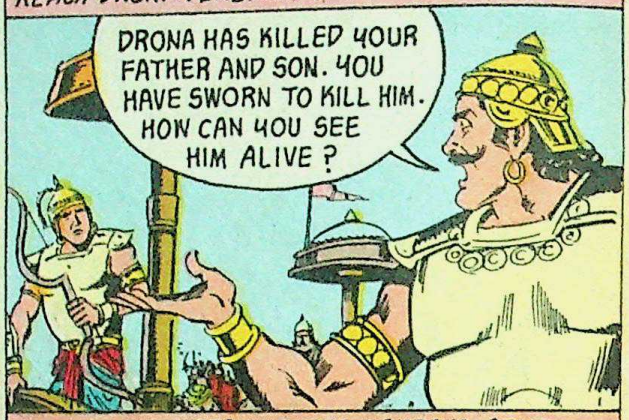
"DURYODHANA CAME TO HELP DRONA WITH THE REST OF THE ARMY.

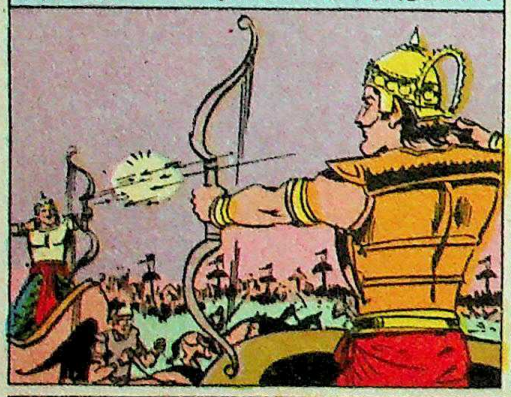


"TRY AS HE MIGHT, DHRISHTADYUMNA COULD NOT REACH DRONA. BHEEMA TAUNTED HIM...

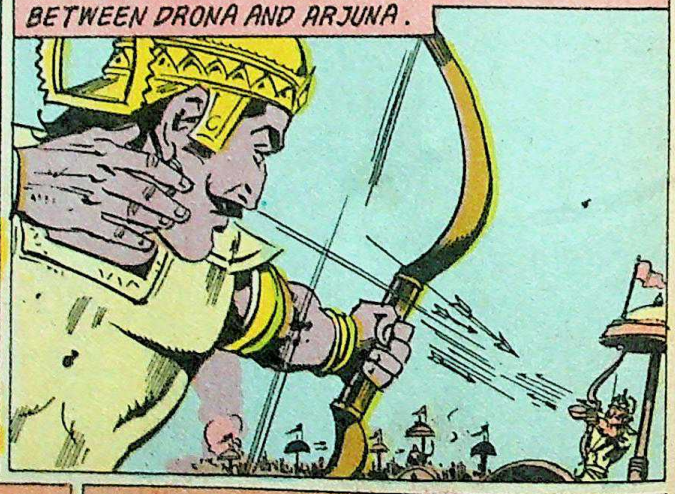


... AND PENETRATING THE KAURAVA ARMY, ENGAGED IN A FIERCE BATTLE WITH KARNA.

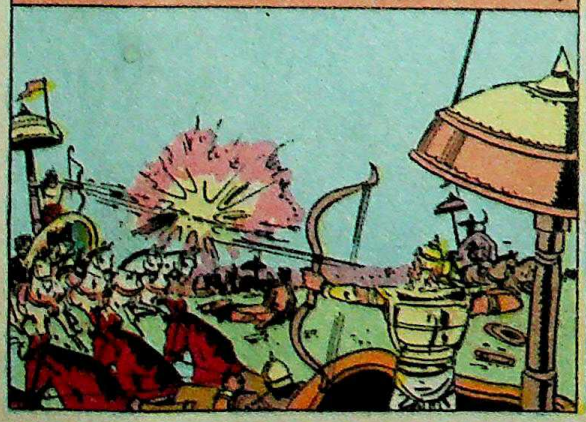
"MEANWHILE THE SUN ROSE IN THE EAST.* THE WARRIORS NOW FOUGHT WITH RENEWED VIGOUR. KARNA WAS ENGAGED IN A COMBAT BY BHEEMA.



"BUT THE SPECTACULAR SIGHT WAS THE CONFRONTATION. BETWEEN DRONA AND ARJUNA.



"AFTER A PROLONGED FIGHT WITH EARTHLY AND CELESTIAL WEAPONS, DRONA SENT THE BRAHMASTRA TOWARDS ARJUNA WHO COUNTERED IT WITH THE SAME ASTRA.



NOW DRONA TURNED AWAY FROM ARJUNA AND FOUGHT THE PANCHALA ARMY.

* THE FIFTEENTH DAY OF THE BATTLE.

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"DURYODHANA AND SATYAKI WERE ENGAGED IN A STRANGE ENCOUNTER.

WHILE THEY RAINED ARROWS AT EACH OTHER, THEY RECALLED WITH NOSTALGIA THEIR EARLIER DAYS.

WHAT HAPPY TIMES WE HAD TOGETHER, DEAR SATYAKI. NOW BECAUSE OF MY GREED, WE MEET AS ENEMIES.

MY DEAR DURYODHANA, THIS IS NEITHER OUR GURU'S HOUSE NOR AN ASSEMBLY. LET US FIGHT LIKE TRUE KSHATRIYAS.

"MEANWHILE DRONA WAS FIGHTING AS IF POSSESSED BY A DEMON. THE PANDAVAS WATCHED AGHAST.

THIS IS NOT LIKE THE ACHARYA AT ALL.

HE DOES NOT LOOK HUMAN.

"THE PANIC AMONG THE SOLDIERS SET KRISHNA THINKING.

DRONA IS USING UNFAIR MEANS. HE IS EVEN USING DIVINE WEAPONS AGAINST ORDINARY SOLDIERS.

"HE SAID TO YUDHISHTHIRA –

IF DRONA KEEPS FIGHTING THUS, YOU WILL HAVE NO ARMY LEFT. WE WILL HAVE TO MAKE HIM LAY DOWN HIS WEAPONS.

YES, BUT HOW?

KRISHNA THOUGHTFULLY SAID –

I AM SURE IF HE HEARS THAT HIS SON ASHWATTHAMA IS NO MORE, HE WILL STOP FIGHTING.

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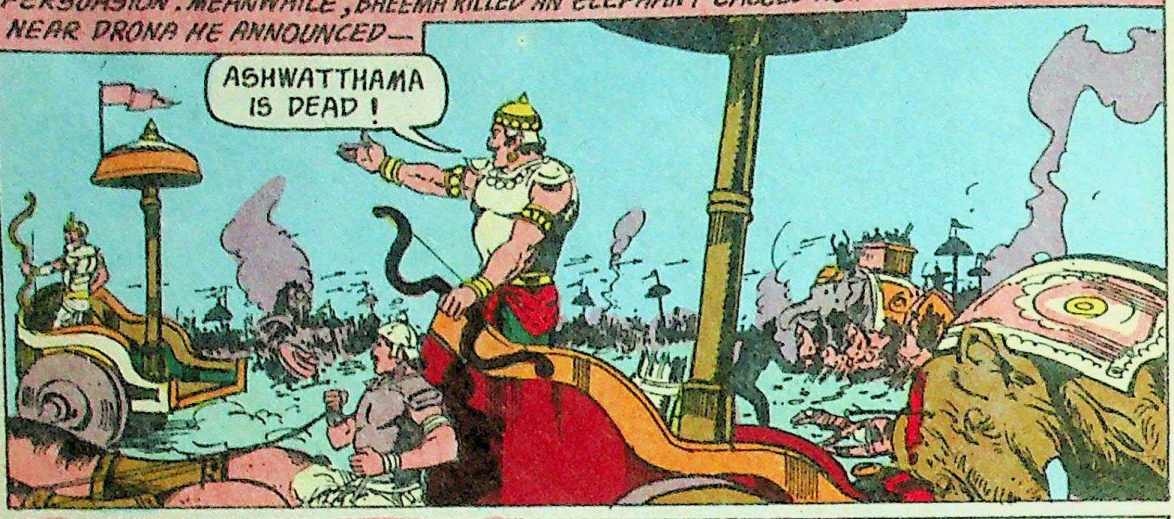
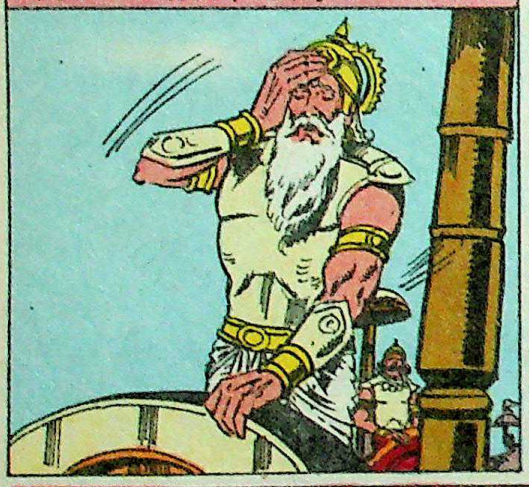
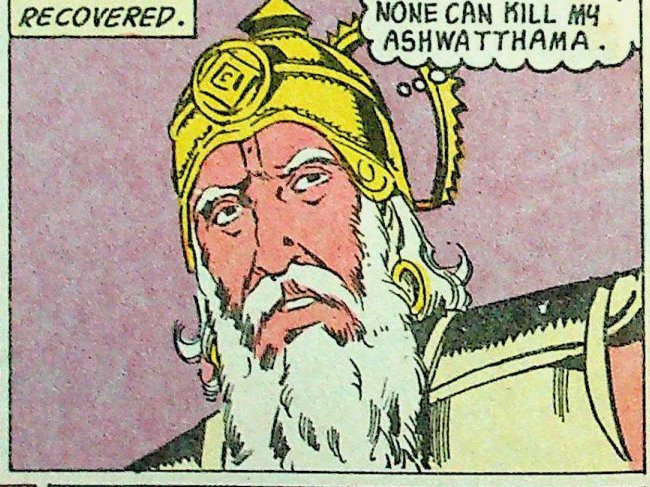
"ARJUNA DID NOT APPROVE OF THIS. BUT KRISHNA AGREED AFTER MUCH PERSUASION. MEANWHILE, BHEEMA KILLED AN ELEPHANT CALLED ASHWATTHAMA. GOING NEAR DRONA HE ANNOUNCED—



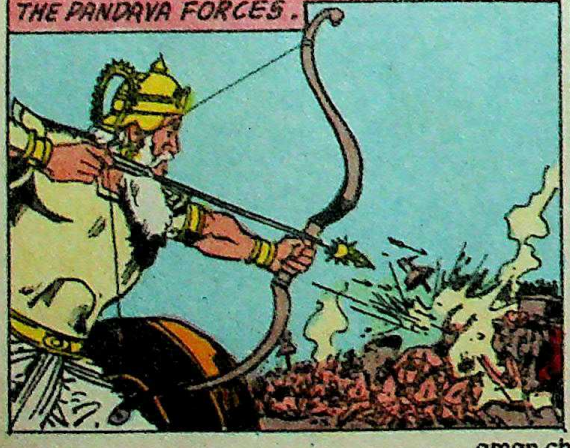
DRONA ALMOST FAINTED WITH SHOCK.



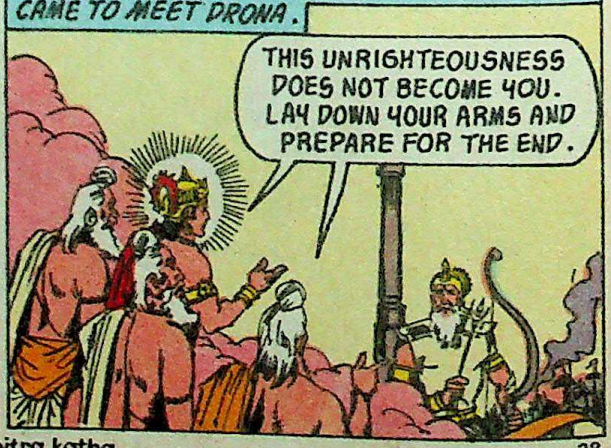
BUT SOON RECOVERED.



"DRONA RESUMED FIGHTING WITH ALL WEAPONS AT HIS DISPOSAL, SLAUGHTERING THE PANDAVA FORCES.



"SEEING HIS UNFAIR AND INHUMAN APPROACH, THE RISHIS FROM HEAVEN, LED BY AGNI, CAME TO MEET DRONA.



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* BECAUSE OF HIS RIGHTEOUS CONDUCT YUDHISHTHIRA'S CHARIOT WAS ALWAYS FOUR FINGERS' BREADTH ABOVE THE GROUND.

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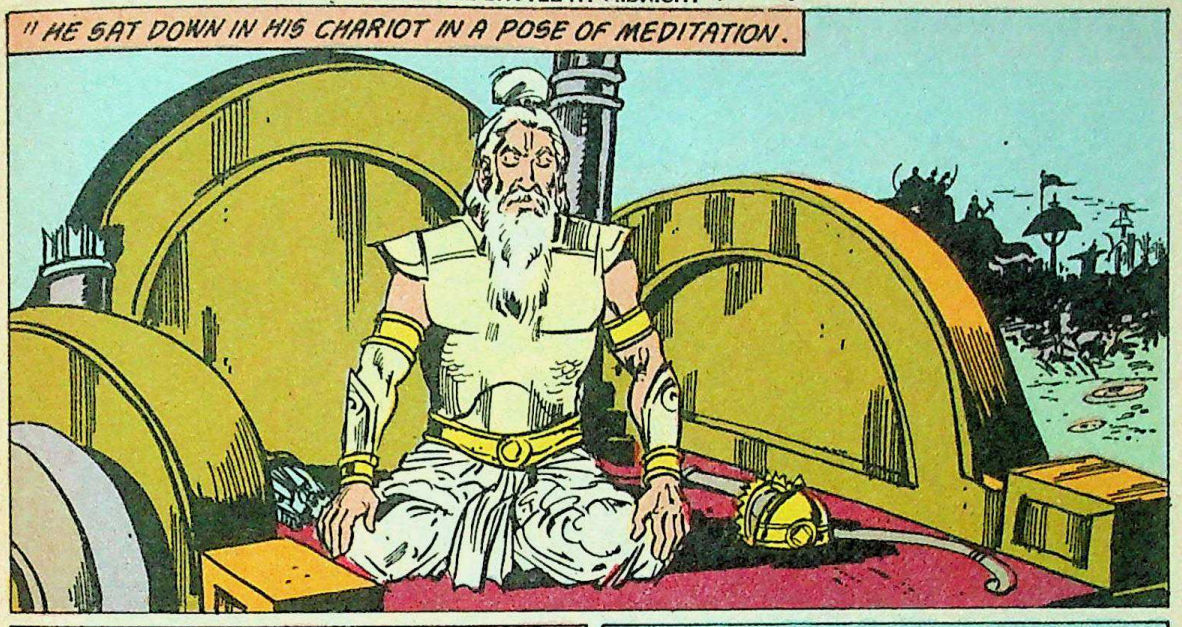

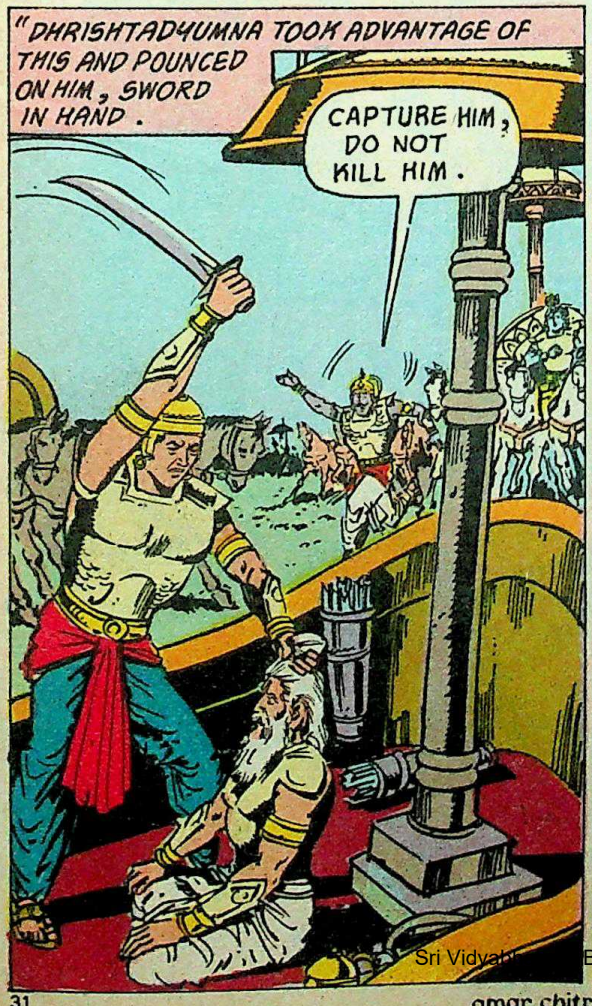

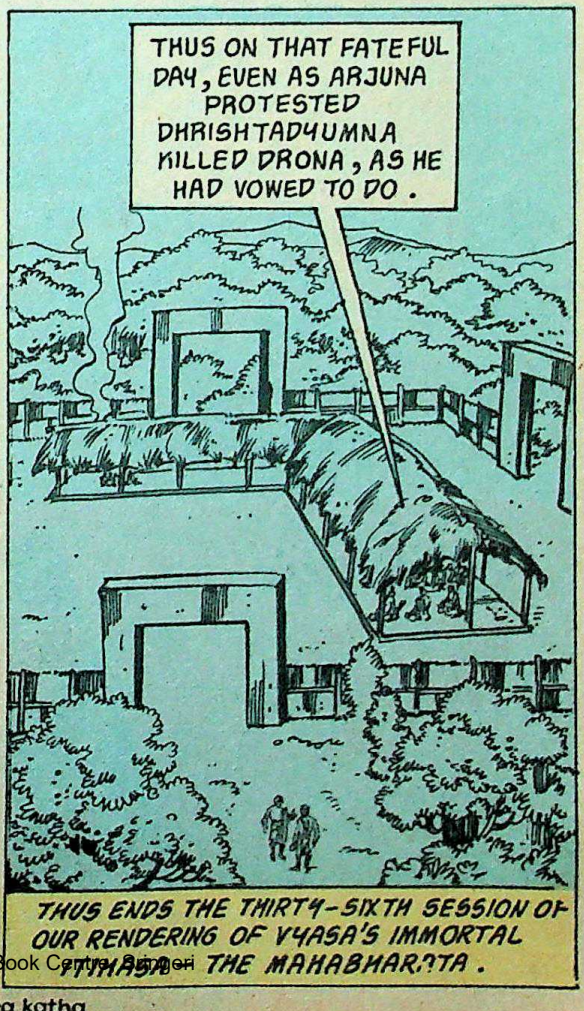

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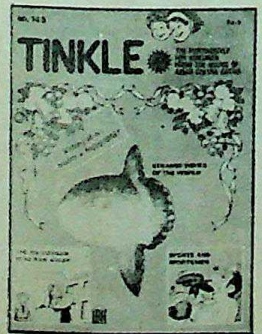

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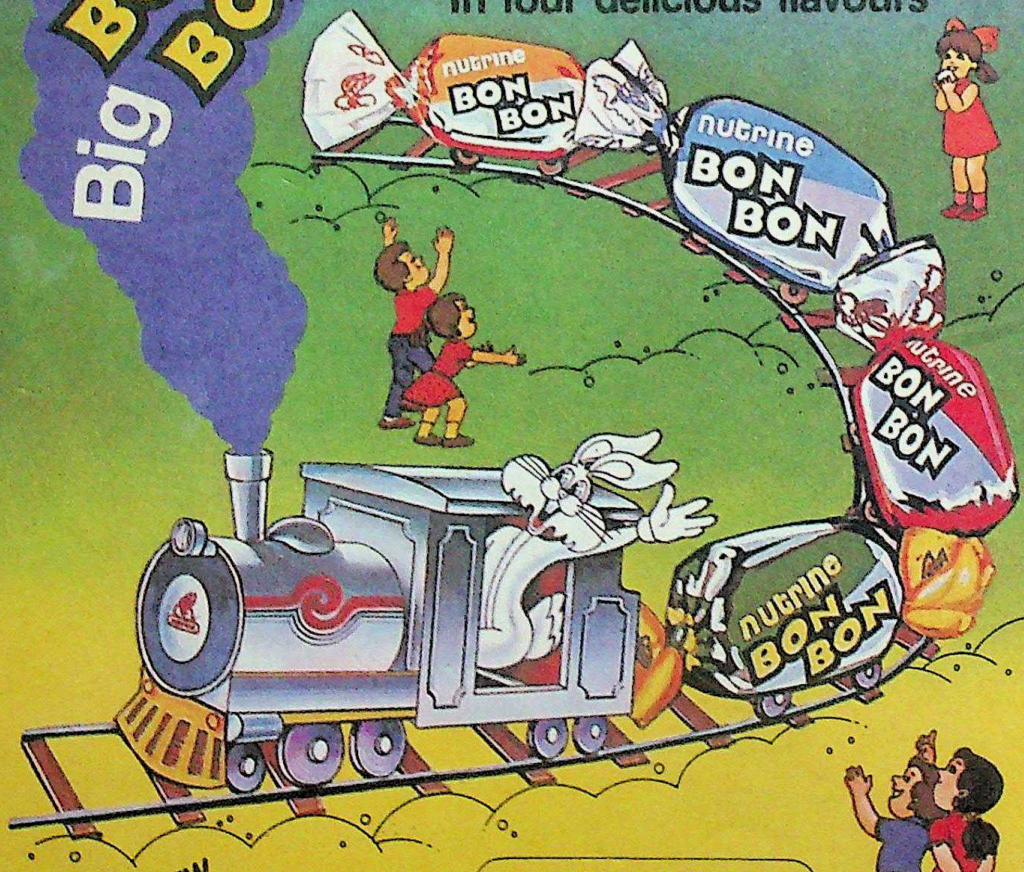

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